

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USUN N 02534 01 OF 02 171943Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----120515 171953Z /66

O 171934Z JUN 78
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2104
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 02534

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

E.O.11652:GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, UNSC, LE, IS
SUBJECT: SOUTHERN LEBANON SITUATION

REF: STATE 154408

1. URQUHART CALLED LEONARD MORNING OF JUNE 17 TO EXPRESS
SERIOUS CONCERN OVER SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION. HE HAS
JUST FINISHED READING OVERNIGHT CABLE FROM THE FIELD
AND FEELS A PATTERN IS DEVELOPING WHICH COULD LEAD TO THE
COLAPSE OF UNIFIL WITH GRAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ALL CON-
CERNED.

2. SITUATION AS URQUHART SEES IT IS ONE OF EXCELLENT
COOPERATION FROM PLO WHICH CANNOT LAST IF CHRISTIAN
MILITIAS ARE NOT BROUGHT INTO LINE. HE REPORTED THAT
WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH PLO AT VARIOUS POINTS OF CONTACT
HAS IF ANYTHING BEEN IMPROVING LATELY. WE NOTE THAT THIS
IS NOT SOMETHING WHICH URQUHART AND HIS COLLEAGUES FEEL
IS IN ANYWAY BLAMEWORTHY, BUT RATHER IS THEIR
NORMAL DUTY TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE RELATIONS WITH ALL PARTIES
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IN ANY AREA WHERE UN IS OPERATING. URQUHART SAID UN
OBSERVERS INVITED INTO BEAUFORT CASTLE HAVE BEEN GIVEN
BEST POSSIBLE TREATMENT BY PALESTINIANS ON THE SPOT.

3. THIS COOPERATION, URQUHART WARNS, IS FRAGILE, AND HE
BEGINS TO SEE SIGNS OF PLO RESTIVENESS. UNLESS BEHAVIOR
OF CHRISTIAN MILITIA IS SHARPLY ALTERED, HE BELIEVES PLO

WILL SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE INFILTRATION SOUTHWARD AND PREPARE TO STRIKE AT CHRISTIANS. UN IS CONTINUING TO RESTRICT INFILTRATION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BUT CANNOT TOTALLY HALT IT AND COULD DO LITTLE BUT GET OUT OF THE WAY IF THE PLO AND CHRISTIANS REALLY GO AT EACH OTHER.

4. BEHAVIOR OF CHRISTIAN MILITIA CONTRASTS STRIKINGLY WITH THAT OF PLO. THEY HAVE MOVED TANKS AND ARTILLERY INTO FULL VIEW ALONG EAST BANK OF LITANI IN GENERAL AREA OF BEAUFORT AND LAST NIGHT SENT SOME 20 ROCKETS INTO AREA NORTH OF THE CASTLE. THERE WAS AMAZINGLY NO RETURN FIRE BUT THIS APPEARS TO UNNY AND, URQUHART SAYS, TO COMMANDERS IN THE FIELD TO BE PART OF A PATTERN OF CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY DESIGNED TO PROVOKE PALESTIAN REACTIONS.

5. CONCURRENTLY WITH THESE DEVELOPMENTS ISRAELI GOVERNMENT CIRCLES APPEAR TO BE ON A CAMPAIGN TO DENEGRATE UNIFIL. DAYAN LETTER TO WALDHEIM WAS ONE ELEMENT BUT SERIES OF ITEMS IN JERUSALEM POST AND OTHER ISRAELI MEDIA HAVE SAME GENERAL THRUST. UNIFIL WAS WIDELY PRAISED IN PAST WEEKS WHEN IT WAS IN VISIBLE CONFLICT WITH PALESTINIANS. NOW THAT IT IS ATTEMPTING TO MOVE INTO CHRISTIAN AREA, IT IS BEING WIDELY CONDEMNED.

6. URQUHART'S DARKEST FEARS ARE THAT SOME ISRAELI OFFICIALS ARE HOPING THERE WILL BE AN EXPLOSION BETWEEN
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CHRISTIANS AND PLO ON A SCALE WITH WHICH UNIFIL COULD NOT DEAL. ISRAELI ARMY WOULD THEN MOVE BACK IN TO PREVENT "GENOCIDE" OF CHRISTIANS AND SETTLE DOWN FOR THE LONG HAUL. URQUHART DOES NOT ATTRIBUTE THESE NOTIONS TO BEGIN, WEIZMAN OR DAYAN, BUT WORRIES THAT THEY ARE WIDE-SPREAD IN CIRCLES INFLUENTIAL ENOUGH TO PERSUADE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO RETURN TO LEBANON IF UNIFIL IS UNABLE TO CARRY OUT ITS MISSION.

7. IMMEDIATE PROBLEM IS GETTING CHRISTIAN MILITIAS TO CONFORM TO INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED FROM BEIRUT AND PASSING THROUGH HADDAD. URQUHART CANNOT JUDGE WHETHER HADDAD IS GENERALLY TRYING TO CONTROL MILITIAS, MANY OF WHOM WERE NEVER PART OF HIS FORCES BUT WERE RAISED AND EQUIPED BY ISRAELIS DURING THEIR OCCUPATION. IN ANY CASE NO ONE CAN DOUBT ISRAELI ABILITY TO MAKE CHRISTIANS BEHAVE IF ISRAELIS TRULY PRESS THEM. URQUHART NOTED THAT EVEN GASOLINE TO KEEP THEIR VEHICLES MOVING MUST COME FROM METULLA, AS WELL AS MILITARY SUPPLIES OF ALL SORTS. NOT ONLY MUST CHRISTIANS BE BROUGHT TO STOP EFFORT TO PROVOKE PALESTINIAN RETALIATION, THEY MUST CEASE BLOCKING UNIFIL FROM ASSUMING EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF

AREA EVACUATED BY ISRAELIS. UNLESS THIS IS DONE AND DONE QUICKLY, PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON AND ARAB GROUP IN NEW YORK WILL SEE WHOLE UNIFIL OPERATION AS GROSSLY UNBALANCED. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT CHRISTIANS MUST ALL LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS TOMORROW, BUT IN THE FIRST INSTANCE THAT THEY CEASE IMPEDING UNIFIL MOVEMENT AND RESTRICT THEMSELVES TO CHRISTIAN VILLAGES.

8. COMMENT: WE HAVE RARELY SEEN URQUHART, WHO IS RELATIVELY IMMUNE TO FLAP, AS DISTURBED AS THIS. WE WILL BE WATCHING WITH INTEREST FOR WEIZMAN'S REACTIONS TO DEMARCHE DIRECTED BY REFTEL, BUT WE URGE DEPT CONSIDER REINFORCING THIS DEMARCHE THROUGH ISRAELI EMBASSY IN WASH-

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 02534

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

INGTON, MAKING IT PARTICULARLY CLEAR THAT WE AND EVERYONE CONCERNED ARE WELL AWARE THAT CHRISTIAN FORCES, WHETHER THEY ARE HADDAD'S OR THOSE SPONSORED BY ISRAEL, CANNOT DISREGARD FIRM GUIDANCE FROM ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. LEONARD

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